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PROBLEMS FOR THE CIA

Through no desire of its own, the Central Intelligence Agency has been in the limelight recently. The disclosure that the CIA for years has been quietly financing a variety of nongovernmental activities, including those of the National Student Association, has aroused understandable interest — and considerable criticism — in Washington.

As early as 1955, I advocated a Joint Committee on Foreign Intelligence, and I have now introduced an updated version of this proposal. Setting up such a committee now will not remedy what has already taken place, but I feel that more is needed than the present informal arrangement, with a few Senators and Congressmen on different committees being kept informed of CIA's operational activities.

The CIA is, of course, responsible both to the President and to Congress, and its present predicament may be the result of too casual supervision by these two "masters" of the agency's activities. For example, had there been a formal

CIA "watchdog" committee in Congress, this trouble might not have developed because that committee would be charged with responsibility for maintaining a constant surveillance over the agency's activities. It presumably would know of all activities being conducted, and it would be in a position to recommend a curtailment or cessation of operations of which it disapproved.

Furthermore, if any difficulties did arise, despite the committee's oversight function, there would have been a much more informed and constructive response from Congress. Equally as important, the "watchdog" committee would serve both as a focal point for Congressional inquiries regarding the CIA and as a means by which the Agency's activities could be explained to others on Capitol Hill and elsewhere.

There have been demands that Congress hold a full-fledged investigation of CIA and that its operational activities be drastically curtailed. In the meantime there seems to be a compulsion to spread on the public record the full details of

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just what has been financed, and how it has been done. These revelations, in my opinion, have gone too far, and they unquestionably have already weakened the CIA. For that reason, I trust that Congress will move in this area with considerable discretion.

Underlying the need for a "watchdog" committee were the events and official statements which immediately followed the disclosure of the CIA's activities, some of which bordered on the ludicrous.

President Johnson's first public statement after the disclosures announced the appointment of a committee to investigate the entire matter. This was interpreted in many quarters as meaning the President was unaware of the covert subsidies. Then various members of Congress who should be in a position to know made it plain that the basic decisions for the secret subsidies had in fact been made at a high level in the executive branch in the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

By ordering an investigation of CIA's activities, the President is launching a probe of the policies of his own administration. Just as remarkable was his appointment to the investigating committee of the head of the CIA, the very agency which is the subject of the inquiry.

As matters now stand, the CIA must remain silent, at least publicly. For reasons best known to himself, the President has said little while the Vice President has joined in sharp criticism of the CIA. This is

difficult to understand. Key members of the Administration might more logically be expected to defend and explain why these covert expenditures have been authorized — certainly one would not expect them to join, as has Mr. Humphrey, in the rock-throwing.

In such a jumbled situation, it looks as if the biggest loser would be the CIA, an agency of utmost importance to our national security.

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